

# MAI 36 GALERIE

Zurich, June 2012

## MATT MULLICAN

*WHO FEELS THE MOST PAIN IN THE FIVE WORLDS*

**Preview:** Sunday, 10 June 2012, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
**Exhibition:** 9 June - 28 July 2012  
**Hours:** Tue-Fri, 11 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.; Sat, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

We are pleased to announce our next exhibition of recent work by the American artist Matt Mullican (born in Santa Monica, CA, 1951; lives and works in New York and Berlin). His work is regularly showcased in international galleries and museums, most recently in a solo exhibition at Haus der Kunst in Munich.

Since the beginning of the 1970s, Matt Mullican has investigated the meaning of life in his artistic studies, trying to establish the order of the universe and devise a system to chart its encyclopaedic dimensions. The result is a subjective cosmology that includes phenomena beyond concrete perception, accessible only through trances and hypnosis. Mullican engages the latter in popular performances, which are photographed and presented in galleries. Based on a cartographic structure in combination with colour symbolism and a system of signs, his models take shape in a diversity of media: drawings, photographs, photo assemblages, flags, sculptures, light boxes, video, prints and installations. He fills entire panels with drawings of models, logos, calligrams, lettering, symbols as well as found and invented pictograms. These reference not only everyday life but also questions related to the supernatural, religion and ontology.

The rigorously structured ideas of Conceptual Art, which Mullican embraced while studying with John Baldessari at the *California Institute of the Arts*, Los Angeles, were soon jettisoned in favour of a holistic worldview. Mullican subsequently worked out two cosmological models. The first one of 1973 is based on childhood convictions and describes the journey of his soul into worlds beyond. The drawings show heaven and earth, life and death, destiny and God. He first recorded the second, considerably more abstract version in 1983. He describes it as a total cosmology, embracing his concept of five levels of consciousness as reflected in a diversity of sign systems. The five universes are assigned to different levels of perception: green is the level of pure matter, of "physical elements", followed by the blue world of objects created by humans, the "world unframed", which is comparable to a life without consciousness and the adjoining yellow world, the "world framed", which represents cultural hierarchies and stands for the arts. The next level in black and white refers to the empire of "language"; the last "subjective" world is red and stands for mental activity. Two new large-format rubbings, on view in the gallery, show two levels of the artist's cosmology as abstractions: the "subjective" and the "world framed".

In *Untitled (Try and Beat This, Mars)*, 1974, phenomenal landscape photographs of our planet from the *National Geographic* that erupt in incredible bursts of colour, testify to a lost universe. At the time, Mullican juxtaposed this work with the omnipresent world of comics. The 29-part, mixed-media sequence of pictures *Who feels the most Pain*, 1973/82, pictures a variety of human figures, representing the existential cycle of human life on the five levels of consciousness. They are the outcome of the artist's investigation into the impact of the media in the 1970s. The exhibition at Mai 36 promises to be an exciting journey through Matt Mullican's cosmologies, despite – or perhaps even because of – occasional flashes of insight that the perpetual, manic attempt to classify the world will always be utopian. (Text: Dominique von Burg)

**Preview: Sunday, 10 June, 11 AM to 5 PM. Matt Mullican will be present.**

For visual materials please contact [office@mai36.com](mailto:office@mai36.com)

We welcome you to explore this artist's exceptional universe.

Mai 36 Galerie

Victor Gisler